

Toward a theory of life course institutionalization¹

R. Levy, University of Lausanne

1. Theorizing the life course

Over the past 10-15 years, life course analysis and biographical research have undergone considerable developments. Not the least of them has been its leaving the traditional field of population studies, invading many other areas such as labor market, educational and family studies.² The main theoretical focus has usually been on the person and her/his immediate social environment, at the expense of meso- and macrosocial organization. The present article attempts to redress the balance by placing the concept of the life course into a model of general social structure. It aims essentially at developing an analytical framework that allows to formulate differentiated hypotheses about relationships between macrosocial changes and microphenomena concerning life courses. The proposed analysis should serve not so much to postulate actual changes as to elucidate the mechanisms underlying them.

The theorizing strategy of this essay is built on the principle that any actual life course can be analyzed as a "status biography", or more precisely as a person's specific sequence of participation-position-role configurations. Put in these terms, the life course can be conceived of as a movement through social space³. With this postulate as starting-point, the micro and macro levels of analysis can be integrated with each other, allowing life courses to be treated not as socially isolated or purely cultural phenomena, but also as phenomena that are structurally determined and structure-generating. The analysis insists on the complementary relationship between objectivist and subjectivist approaches which are currently identified - and too often opposed - by the labels of life course vs. biographical analysis⁴.

¹ This article is a modified version of a contribution in German to Voges & Behrens (1994).

² This change is well documented in the three volumes on "Status Passages and the Life Course" edited by Heinz (1991a, 1991b and 1992).

³ In the case of international migration: the space of two or more societies as well as the international space.

⁴ Frequently and especially in the European debate, "biographical analysis" is used to refer to qualitative approaches, "life course research" to quantitative approaches, with their different kinds of method, data and interpretational options. In the following article this distinction will not be respected because its argument treats individual trajectories as total social phenomena with structural and cultural aspects, allowing the application of all methodological and theoretical approaches (see Zetterberg 1965 for an early "inclusivist" stand). Life courses are actively constructed and passively endured, they can result from structural and cultural constraints and can create or transform structures and cultural representations. Therefore the two expressions will be used as synonyms.

After a brief exposition of the concept of the general model of "status biography", life course institutionalization will be discussed. On this basis, a program for operationalization will be sketched out. For reasons both of space and predominant tendencies in this field, the accent will be more on structural connections; this tendency does not imply a theoretical marginalization of cultural (normative and intentional) components, but rather an attempt to compensate for an opposite bias that is present in a significant part of the literature.

2. Analyzing the life course as a movement through social structure

The theoretical model for life course analysis on which this article is constructed has been outlined first by Levy (1977; Anderson 1985 proposes a similar direction); it will be briefly presented. The fundamental principle consists in conceptualizing the life course as an objectively traceable and subjectively (re-) constructed movement through the social structure. The general principle does not depend on a specific theoretical model of that structure, but its application needs such a choice. For reasons that will not be detailed here, it seems preferable to choose a model of multidimensional stratification that does a priori neither postulate rigid class barriers nor exclude them, but rather treat their existence as an empirical question.

Many authors who use multidimensional conceptions of stratification refer themselves to Weber, especially to his small chapter on class, party and status groups that implicitly posits the predominant relevance of the according institutional sectors, economy, politics and "honor" or prestige. Nevertheless, the main thrust of their arguments remains functionalist, i.e., meritocratic. Except for neo-Marxist analysis (e.g., Wright 1978, 1985), the tendency seems to be toward theoretical minimalism which reduces social structure to some set of "parameters" or structuring dimensions (Blau & Duncan 1967, Blau 1977). Instead, the following construction takes up the lead of Heintz (1968, 1972) who combined in an original way Weber's dialectic of power and legitimacy with the more open, functionalist conception of status hierarchies, the number of these hierarchies being neither theoretically limited nor determined a priori in their quality or content; this approach to inequality is associated with a realist social systems approach (see also Levy 1989).

The minimal set of elements necessary to spell out the model of status biography comprises the notion of a complex, i.e. horizontally and vertically differentiated society the members of which a) mostly participate in several of society's differentiated

subsystems or social fields⁵ and b) are therefore located at specific positions in these fields' internal structures (structural aspect). These participations and positions are subject c) to social evaluation, to expectations, norms and interpretations (roles, i.e., cultural aspect). These three components give an extended description of the social location of a person: once we know in which social fields someone participates, which positions she/he occupies in their structures (especially in their internal hierarchies), and what roles are tied to these positions, we have a considerable base for inferences about the structural and cultural frame in which this person plans and realizes her/his action and lives his/her life. Thus, a person's social location is characterized to a large extent by a configuration of participations with their respective positions and roles, and his/her life course can be analyzed as a specific sequence of such configurations.

2.1. Participation in interaction fields

The macrosociological vision of society as a complex system of more or less institutionalized and differentiated fields of social interaction, each of which is characterized by its specific internal structure and (sub-)culture as well as by the relationships between these fields, obviously implies on the microsocial level multiple participation by most individuals⁶. This fact has been conceptualized in various ways, for instance by Merton (1968: 422-438) through his double notion of status and role set, or by Lenski's (1954) introducing the concept of status inconsistency. It is striking that in most of these works and the debates they have provoked the aspect of participation has received much less attention than that of position (e.g., in the analysis of stratification and mobility)⁷. The most important exception to this tendency is probably role theory, mainly by its central concept of (inter-) role conflict that focuses on the very coexistence of several participations and their potential for problems of loyalty, incompatibility and overload (Gross et al. 1958). However, in the perspective of life course analysis, the participational aspect is at least as important as the positional one as it concerns entries into and exits from differentiated fields of social interaction (founding a family, taking up an occupation, retiring from work, etc.). Life course analysis is interested in changes in a person's participation profile; the mechanisms

⁵ Although the present model is not built on Simmel's vision, it has an obvious relationship to his conception of cross-cutting social circles.

⁶ Except extreme - but not necessarily unusual - situations of persons finding themselves in a single, hence "total" social field (Goffman 1961). It is quite common to consider such a situation to be highly exceptional - we think of special populations such as inmates of monasteries, asylums, prisons and the like - but we should not forget that for babies, the family is a total institution.

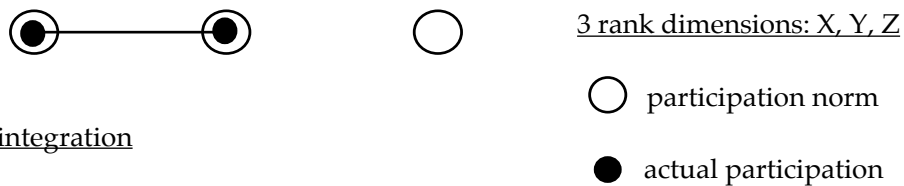
⁷ The *situs* concept, rarely used in any systematic way, could theoretically be considered to correspond to participation. However, it has been used almost exclusively to abstractly refer to business sectors or other types of functional division of the economy.

related to such changes need not be identical to the ones related to positional changes⁸. Thus it is important to theoretically tie participational and positional aspects together as distinctive aspects of a person's structural location. Thinking in terms of profiles of structural location provides the necessary link between multidimensional inequality and the diversity of individual life conditions instead of presenting stratification and "life style communities" as theoretical alternatives.

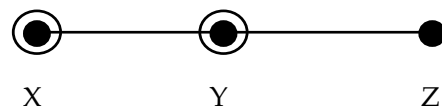
The participational profile has a structural and a cultural side, especially concerning norms. Among these are age norms (already stressed by Neugarten et al. 1965), especially those that specify which participations are socially considered to be "normal" at various periods of life.⁹ These norms define an age-related sequence of participation profiles that are culturally considered to be "complete"; the factual profile of an individual's structural integration may correspond to varying degrees to these norms and can accordingly be considered to be "complete", "incomplete" (incumbent underintegrated) or "overcomplete" (incumbent overintegrated). It is plausible to postulate that deviations from the culturally defined complete participation profile (fig. 1) constitute a potential tension (again in structural and in cultural terms, i.e., concerning both social integration and evaluation) with which an actor has to cope in some sense (and be it only by trying to redefine normality for him- or herself).

Fig. 1: tension of incompleteness

a) Underintegration



b) Overintegration



Up to now, this kind of questioning has hardly been explored in any systematic way; it is not at the center of our concerns and cannot be treated here in any more detail. But its relevance can at least be illustrated by mentioning some ensuing problems: Is it possible to demonstrate the existence of subjectively felt tensions of incomple-

⁸ Moen et al. (1989) show for instance that multiple participation in social fields increases women's life expectancy.

⁹ Thus, the prohibition of children's work is a norm, institutionalized by law, that excludes participation in the occupational world during a certain period of life; the generalization of paid retirement has the same implication.

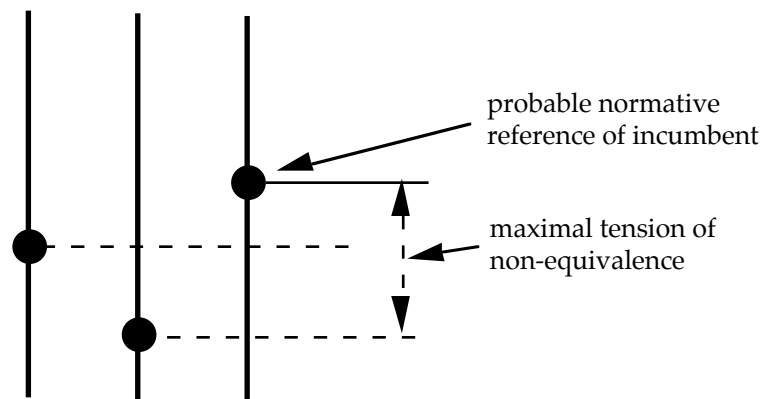
teness? What coping strategies are used, under which conditions and with what results? Are there also tensions of overcompleteness (overintegration, role cumulation), and what are their consequences? Do the consequences of scope enlargements and scope restrictions of a person's participation profile differ according to whether they conform to life course norms ("cyclical oscillation") or not ("anti-cyclical oscillation")? Such changes may have decisive implications for the social environment in which a person's everyday life takes place, its normative density, the degree to which his/her sociability is engaged or stimulated, and many other important aspects of an individual's personal and social existence. Does configurational incompleteness (or overcompleteness) only result from compulsory passages, imposed upon the person from outside, or may it also flow from their personal strategies - e.g. withdrawing from an interaction field in which one experiences unbearable tensions, or reducing tensions that result from incompatible participations? Moreover, it should be taken into account that tensions may not only exist with reference to social norms, but also to structural necessities (e.g. in the case of unemployment).

2.2. Positions in the structure of interaction fields

Positional profiles are more often studied than participational profiles, but at the same time in a more controversial manner, especially with reference to the concept of status inconsistency. There is neither room nor necessity here to recall the long debate about its relevance and its operationalization. The idea of multiple participation in interaction fields that are not socially amorphous, but have an internal structure and are part of the encompassing society, does not necessarily imply the hypothesis of status inconsistency, but it does imply the principle that an actor's structural location has to be analyzed in terms of his/her positional profile, much in the sense of Merton's concept of status-set (but not only with respect to the prestige component of positions). A more differentiated elaboration of this perspective could very well produce novel possibilities to test the validity of inconsistency hypotheses. Too many empirical studies are based on a purely formalistic conception, frequently not even distinguishing between the "direction" of positional inconsistency - is it plausible to think that a configuration with higher education than occupation is socially equivalent to its opposite? - and refer even less to norms that could be relevant. The existence of norms of positional equivalence, which may vary historically, between sectors and regions or other social subsystems, and most probably also between the sexes, is certainly plausible. Such norms specify the desirability and the "normal" simultaneity or sequence of upward or downward movements; they specify also the equivalence or non-equivalence of positions in different hierarchies. Moreover, the social relevance of deviations of actual positional profiles from normative equiva-

lence may vary according to different factors (especially, we may hypothesize that this relevance is higher in a situation of structural crystallization than in a situation of low crystallization). These norms may also be subject to individual and collective (sub-cultural) manipulation.¹⁰ The simplest hypothesis should postulate that the degree to which an actual positional profile does not correspond to the norm of equivalence (fig. 2) constitutes again a potential tension with which actors can cope in various ways.

Fig. 2: tension of non-equivalence

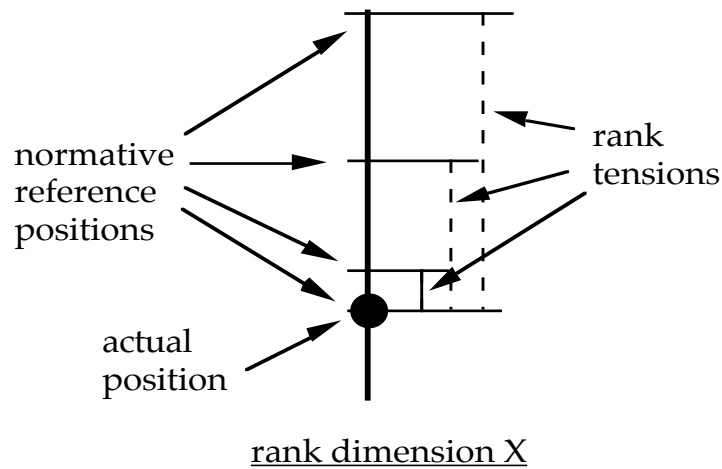


3 rank dimensions: X, Y, Z, divergent actual positions

In addition to the form of a participation profile - notched or equilibrated with respect to the norm of equivalence - we must not forget its general vertical location, i.e. a person's overall rank in social stratification, be it in terms of class or in the sense of a gradual stratum model. This is of course the most studied and theorized aspect of positional differentiation and mobility; even if one accepts a multidimensional view of stratification, the notion of general positional tension does not lose its fundamental significance. Again, its relevance will depend on the degree of structural crystallization. In fact, most general theories of social stratification and its conflict-generating potential do not explicitly elaborate the complications that stratificational multidimensionality may induce; their propositions are mainly based on what is termed here rank or positional tension, i.e., the tension resulting from a low factual position as compared to a higher normative or reference position (fig. 3).

¹⁰ One of the most elaborated efforts at theoretical and methodological elaboration has been proposed by Bornschier & Heintz (1977).

Fig. 3 general rank- or positional tension



While overall hierarchical rank certainly remains a central concept for stratification analysis¹¹, ignoring multidimensionality in order to escape problems of attributing persons or groups to clear-cut positions would be a bad solution. Median SES or similar scores risk to artificially level out - depending once more on the degree of crystallization - "imbalanced" position profiles and to group together categories that are quite heterogeneous. This simplifying analytical practice could well be responsible for some of the diffuseness of the findings concerning middle classes "identified" by such measures.¹²

2.3. Roles in an interaction field's normative order

The role aspect will be least elaborated in this article. This should not be taken to indicate any minor importance, as it belongs to a complete description of a person's "being-in-society" and offers an important link between structure- and culture oriented analysis. Cultural and subjective aspects are not exhaustively organized by a person's roles, but they have to be taken into account since they constitute a particular component of subjective meaning, of auto- and hetero-interpretation in various interaction fields and their (sub-)cultures. This cultural element is externally stabilized, but may be subject to negotiation and interpretation according to the role dis-

¹¹ As documented by many recent debates about the relevance of class (i.e. Clark & Lipset 1991 and the subsequent articles in *International Sociology*).

¹² Given a fictitious stratification system with two relevant rank dimensions, e.g. education and occupation, the same SES would characterize persons with equivalent positions, persons with a positional discrepancy in the sense of a higher position on an "easy access" rank dimension than on the more controlled one (relative discrimination, often the situation of women), and persons with the opposite discrepancy of a higher position on a controlled access dimension than on the easy access one (relative privilege, typically the situation of men).

tance that is both socially offered and individually taken. Again, we could look at specific consequences of life course related changes of a person's role configuration, e.g. concerning the normative and cognitive structuring of the social space in which he/she acts, concerning the changes such sequences may imply with respect to role conflicts, or how such conflicts may in turn motivate projects of biographical modification.

* * *

As this article concerns essentially processes of institutionalization or de-institutionalization of life courses, this short sketch of our theoretical model of individuals' integration in macro-social space must suffice. Building on this ground, we shall be able to deal with life course institutionalization and its relationship to individual configurations and sequences.

3. Institutionalization of life courses

3.1. Defining life course institutionalization

An easy point of departure for developing some thoughts about life course institutionalization is the fact that life courses follow more or less clearly established patterns, even if this is so to varying degrees. The passages and stages in terms of participational, positional and role configurations that constitute the life courses do not form wildly random and idiosyncratic sequences, but correspond to some standard models which we may call normal biographies or standard life courses (Levy 1977, Anderson 1985). One of the paramount changes in most or all highly industrialized societies since the middle of the 20th century is a certain convergence of the masculine and feminine normal biographies; their main difference has been the fact that for quite some generations, the family career has been considered compatible with a professional career for the husband, but not for the wife. Scholars have widely discussed the thesis of a substantial de-institutionalization of the life course (Held 1986, Buchmann 1989), which would be tantamount to the disappearance of any normal biography. The standardization of any of the aspects that have been mentioned may in fact vary; this is exactly what the issue of life course institutionalization is about. For this reason, the analytical concept presented so far is not based on any specific degree of life course institutionalization; it rather treats the actual extent of life course standardization as an empirical question.

The postulate that standard life courses actually exist should take into account the possibility of different patterns for different social categories - the existence of a single normal biography would be a theoretically unlikely extreme case. The most obvious differentiation is the one between male and female standard biographies; there may be other differentiations between social classes or according to other parameters that have attracted less attention. The existence of normal biographies or standard life courses does not require that all or most life courses correspond to them; it means that there is - as Kohli (1986) formulates - a certain factual and normative prevalence of modal sequences. Two aspects of standardization may be distinguished: sequencing (prevalence of specific sequences) and "chronologization" (association of transitions and periods with time, e.g. with age).

To the extent that descriptive evidence of standardization obtains, the conclusion that there is institutionalization is plausible although not yet proven. What does this term mean? In sociological jargon, "institutionalization" is a catch-all term whose most general sense is expressed by Feibleman's (1956: 52) well-known saying that institutions are frozen answers to fundamental questions.

However, we should not content ourselves with such vague formulations. Even the distinction between institution and institutionalization is frequently blurred. Kohli (1986) calls the normal biography an institution. Should it so be considered in the sense of the cultural anthropological term like the incest-taboo, the family or religion? It is certainly institutionalized. There is considerable lack of clarity in the use of the term, especially concerning its cultural and structural components. Nevertheless, authors speaking of institutions (e.g. Schütz/Luckmann 1973) seem to refer rather to organizational forms, i.e., to parts of social morphology or structure, than to temporal patterns or processes. The cultural anthropological origins of the term resound in many definitions¹³; they should not be allowed to obscure structural aspects.

In this context, Berger & Luckmann's approach (1966: 61) in terms of three phases, externalization - objectivation - internalization, is very helpful as it integrates into an overall conception of institutionalization processes the apparent dualism between the subjective and the objective, i.e., the actively or - from the individual's point of view - internally constructed and the externally imposed character of social forms. However, this formulation is fundamentally micro-sociological. It needs to be complemented in order to account for the collective dimension of the social production

¹³ Two examples among many are: Berger & Luckmann (1966: 54): "Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors."; Connell (1987: 141): "... the cyclical practice that produces it (i.e. social reproduction. RL) is what is meant by an 'institution'. The process of 'institutionalization' then is the creation of conditions that make cyclical practice probable. (Speaking of a 'cycle' is intended as an alternative to the notation of a continuum of practice, the idea that structure is a matter of sameness in practice.)".

of stable forms and these structures' dynamics of self-perpetuation. Building on this ground, the following is an attempt to develop some dimensions and research questions concerning the variable institutionalization of normal biographies.

3.2 Life courses and institutional sectors

Analyzing the social location and integration of individual actors in terms of their configuration, analyzing their life courses as configurational sequences enables us to focus directly on the relationship between life courses and institutional change. If social integration is seen in this perspective, it takes place through participation in one or several interaction fields and occupation of positions in their structures. Any meso- or macrosocial change of an interaction field (be it an institutional sector, such as the economy, or a particular organization that may be part of such a sector) can influence the conditions of individual participation, positioning and mobility by provoking or preventing, facilitating or making them more difficult.

Structural change may also affect the relationships between institutional sectors. Their resulting effects may be different for the occupants of different positions and leave considerable room for interindividual variation. It may be hypothesized that this variation is structured to a quite considerable extent by the societal distribution of material and symbolic resources and by the differential accessibility of biographical options.

Any institutional change on a higher system level can directly or indirectly affect the conditions under which individual life courses are projected and realized. This is, in systemic terms, a top-down effect. Conversely, we must also study to what extent life course patterns change independently from their institutional context and affect it in return, in the sense of a bottom-up influence.

We may hypothesize that the latter possibility is more easily realized if innovative life course behavior takes place collectively and not only as an aggregate of individual behaviors - the latter being rather a result than a cause of structural change (especially because, in the case of purely individual life course innovation, structural blame, i.e., the external attribution of life course constraints, will be less pronounced). As in other cases of structural non-conformity, the elaboration of a common interpretation of experienced constraint (i.e., the construction of critical life course consciousness) is probably a critical condition for the emergence of change-oriented action. In this way, inconsistencies and frictions between institutional regu-

lations, but also structural influences may interfere with traditional biographical patterns¹⁴ and provoke life course consciousness and innovation.

3.3. Forms of institutionalization

There can hardly be any doubt about the principle that life courses are partly following socially constructed patterns, even if these may leave considerable leeway for individual decisions. Thus life course analysis has to inquire very seriously into the mechanisms underlying this construction, i.e., into the reasons for life course institutionalization and de-institutionalization; we should like to know how social typification of personal life courses takes place and how far it goes.

Like any other institutionalized social form, normal biographies or standard life courses have a double nature. As they represent socially anticipated life course decisions, for the person who goes through them they mean at once security and restriction. The aspect of *security* implies such things as the possibility to anticipate one's life course, to have some confidence as to the effects of one's life course decisions, and also a relatively high degree of continuity and stability of one's social position, network status and prestige. The aspect of *constraint* implies social "difficulties" (negative sanctions, discrimination, role stress) threatening people who take nonconformist life course decisions or even exhibiting nonintentional life course deviance. The relative weight of these two aspects may vary quite strongly according to conditions that can be explicitly stated. One consequence of this (more or less personal) evaluation may be the following. If the character of restriction prevails, it is likely that the person looks for more satisfying alternatives, providing that available resources and options allow it. Otherwise, various forms of non-normative acceptance or compliance, even resignation, are to be expected. If the character of security prevails, the person will be ready to pay even a high price for respecting the pattern (in personal and social terms, e.g. in terms of energy invested, isolation, suppression of one's own needs and interests, acceptance of dependence, etc.). The subjective evaluation of the balance between these two aspects will also weigh heavily when it comes

¹⁴ Mayer & Schoepflin (1989, especially p. 203; see also Mayer & Müller 1989) seem to suppose the contrary through the way they describe the state as a creator of biographical continuity and coherence, by virtue of its interventions structuring life courses. Public, especially state agencies (e.g. schools, pension schemes, recruitment practices of the army and the like) are without any doubt major determinants of the rise and maintenance of modern life course patterns, above all for their chronologization and social generalization. The fact that ultimately, all of them are related to the same (corporate, and not necessarily homogenous) political actor should not blind us, however, to the diversity and weak synchronization of that part of their functioning which is relevant for the life course. On the contrary, frictions arising from such diversity may be among the main structural conditions of rising life course consciousness.

to a decision between different life course options and the risks involved in such passages.

3.3.1. Cultural and structural institutionalization

Cultural and structural aspects of social organization should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Nevertheless, some social mechanisms are of a more cultural, some of a more structural character. A rather trivial, but extremely important example of structural institutionalization is the link between work, income and (physical and social) survival in a market society. Only under quite specific and rare circumstances is it possible to remain for one's whole life on Glaser & Strauss' escalator¹⁵ without passing through a rather lengthy working period. This biographical episode is most frequently long and rich of consequences; it may be evaded only in a situation of massive privilege or at the price of material dependency (be it from a bread-winning husband or other personal patronage), or else by social marginality. Education and professional qualification are strongly tied to this link as they determine substantial and formal resources that affect one's chances on the labor market. The existence, effectiveness and compulsory power of this structural link is largely independent of individual dispositions and preferences. It is part of the fundamental institutional order of societies with market economies¹⁶. In societies that rely less on market mechanisms for distributing and allocating everyday goods and more on collective forms of subsistence, this link would be much weaker.

This argument implies, among others, that the fundamental importance of work for our social identity (Jahoda 1982) may have to be seen with reference to a specific form of society and not as a kind of anthropological universal. Despite the large number of empirical studies confirming the psychic and social psychological importance of work, there is little evidence for believing that such importance would also obtain under very different macro-structural (and macro-cultural) conditions - there might in fact be important variations¹⁷. Strict examination of these assumptions

¹⁵ These authors describe the life course as "the universal escalator on which everyone rides" (1971: 171).

¹⁶ Kohli (1985) maintains that the organization of the three phase sequence of modern life courses is organized around work (preparation - execution - recovery). This may be exaggerated with a view to all aspects of the life course, but it correctly reflects the macro-structural centrality of work in modern societies and of the economy as the institutional sectors organizing it. There is little chance that this will fundamentally change for quite some time, contrary to some hasty predictions according to which gainful employment and the organizational structures controlling it have become "sociologically questionable" (Offe 1984).

¹⁷ Recent research on unemployment has shown the importance of a great number of intervening factors ("moderator variables") for the constitution of the link between unemployment and its negative consequences on personality (e.g. Wacker 1985). Moreover, many authors have pointed to the fact that it is not only the absence of work that can have destructive effects, but also the presence of work

would require one to take into account at a time the individual and macro-social level, comparing employed and unemployed persons not only between contexts with high and low unemployment, but also between contexts that differ with respect to the basic structural link mentioned above.

In opposition to this example, all forms of diffusion and socialization of representations and ideologies are cases of cultural institutionalization. Life course models and more generally life course relevant representations (its cultural importance and elaboration and the discourse about it, i.e., the biography in the proper sense of the term; the attribution of responsibility for a person's biographical trajectory, etc.) vary in time and between social categories. A large field of social historical inquiry has been opened by the thesis according to which the "biographization" of life is part of modern individualization (Brose & Hildenbrand 1988): since when, and under what social conditions of emergence and of reproduction does the life course become a target of social aspirations, is it culturally constructed as an internally attributable result of individual action?

Another important fact for this perspective is the existence of different coexisting life course models, especially for the genders (and depending on their living alone or in a family - Levy 1977, Tilly 1984, Saraceno 1989). In terms of individual configurations and the norms related to them, this means that such norms are defined differentially for women and men. To get married is part of the traditional completeness norm for both men and women, but to do paid work was only normative for men, at least for a substantial time during the 19th and 20th centuries and among the middle and higher classes. In the perspective of these norms, a housewife not working outside the home is typically not considered to be unemployed while a husband is. It is against this background of gender-specific norms of configurational completeness that many married women who are "objectively unemployed" and would wish to work find it difficult to define themselves subjectively as unemployed and to claim their ensuing rights. In recent decades, some de-gendering of these norms has taken place (to varying degrees according to countries); nevertheless, they are still present and should be borne in mind by sociologists as they are made up just as frequently of individual ideals, as of institutional "reality insinuations" that inspire and legitimate the procedures of public agencies (Heinz et al. 1988).

if it has to be executed under corresponding conditions (Schober-Brinkmann et al. 1987). Some studies show that there are unemployed persons who succeed to cope in a creative way with this situation and do not suffer from the well-known destructive effects (Fryer & Payne 1983). They form, however, a small minority (Brinkmann 1984) that is able to resort to specific personal and social resources. Much research has to be done in this field. Thus it is not clear whether the young unemployed persons interviewed by Zoll et al. (1987) really belong to this category, whether they already live in institutional conditions that are less marked by the structural link referred to here, or whether they simply are still at the beginning of the classical sequence - already postulated by Jahoda et al. (1933) - of the experience and subjective adaptation to unemployment.

Concerning the distinction between structural and cultural institutionalization, it is plausible to postulate that models which are culturally and structurally institutionalized (as for instance the objective to increase one's material well-being) are much more effective in organizing everyday life than other models which may be consensual and culturally well established (e.g. love for one's fellow men), but not supported by a social substructure (Heintz 1981, Levy 1986).

3.3.2. Direct and indirect, unifying and fragmented institutionalization

Like any other social phenomenon, life course patterns may be institutionalized directly or indirectly¹⁸. Several components of life course institutionalization are direct and fragmented, e.g. most legal norms determining minimal or maximal admission ages to different activities or entitlements¹⁹.

Others are indirect, but no less effective: school schedules, the (frequently insufficient) number of child care institutions relieving parents during their work time, opening hours of shops and state agencies and the like. Most of these ways of functioning and of imposing social rhythms on everyday life suppose the availability, to children and families, of at least one care-taker who is cheap and handy - and most often this function is attributed to a woman. All of these regulations and imposed rhythms are based on insinuations of normality or at least of modality. While they have not been instituted with the objective of influencing life courses, they institute considerable de facto differences between life course options of different categories of people (especially concerning participation or non-participation in social fields), thus contributing to the pushing of men and women into the separate biographical patterns we know. Here again, institutionalization is not unifying, but fragmented.

An even more indirect form of life course institutionalization takes place by the effects of the family life cycle. As long as couples live according to the conventional model of gender role segregation²⁰, an important portion of women's life courses is strongly determined by their family's life cycle, which is in turn heavily conditioned

¹⁸ Mayer & Schoepflin (1989) make a similar, but hardly explicit distinction.

¹⁹ An - incomplete - list from the institutional context of Switzerland may serve as an example: birth: legal existence of the person, taxability on fortune; age 6 to 15: compulsory schooling; 15: minimal age for paid employment; 16: religious majority; 18: majority for writing a will, women marriageable, obligation to contribute to old age insurance, right to elect and vote; 20: capacity to take legal action and liability, men marriageable and liable to military service, eligibility to parliament and government; 50: end of men's obligatory military service; 62: women's retirement and entitlement to pension; 65: men's retirement and entitlement to pension.

²⁰ At least in Europe, this model has been factually and normatively elaborated in the rising bourgeoisie of the 19th century and generalized to the majority of the populations by the middle of the 20th century (Rosenbaum 1982); since the 60's, its predominance - which has probably reached a historical maximum never known before - has been decreasing in all Western societies.

by extra-familiar influences (for instance the schooling regulations and the educational careers of the children, hence also by the functioning of the educational institutions²¹).

The fact that the patterns of life course institutionalization are so strongly based on indirect and fragmented elements can hardly be due to chance. They emanate from different institutions that do not act in coordination, but rather according to their proper logic and their external (mainly political) conditions of functioning²². Even among welfare institutions, coordination with respect to the life course incidence of their functioning is an exception. Where it exists, it is more often created by parallel reference to the same implicit cultural model of modal life courses - which still have some social existence, but decreasing consensuality and relevance - than by any kind of explicit construction of inter-institutional coherence²³.

In the light of the historically growing bureaucratization of a large number of social services - especially forms of help and solidarity which cannot be obtained through any market - it appears that status passages are increasingly disconnected from the passagees' immediate social environment and its dynamics, and connected to more abstract, "universalistic" criteria, such as chronological age. We have already seen that, contrary to what might be expected naively, this change of the social handling of configurational passages does not automatically increase intra-biographical synchronization; it rather creates more incoherent, externally administered partial passages which will be experienced as imposed constraints and not as gratifying options. Inter-biographical (or inter-individual) synchronization, however, will be increased by this process²⁴.

²¹ It is interesting to note that without much theoretical elaboration, current psychological and sociological conceptions of the family life cycle are periodized according to the school career of the family's children. This makes a lot of sociological sense, even if essentialist interpretations in terms of endogenous developmental psychology or "human existentialism" tend to mask the social construction of the successive "developmental tasks" of families and individuals (mainly following Havighurst 1952) by naturalizing or reifying a social process. Erikson's (1950) theory of socio-psychic developmental dilemmas comes closer to an explicit integration of internal and external factors interacting in the construction of a person's biography.

²² This is not only related to multiple participation of individuals in multiple mainly in terms of institutional sectors, not just organizations, but also to the fact that there are often several institutions engaged in regulating the same status passage.

²³ With respect to the whole life course, not to single passages (e.g. the passage to adulthood or retirement), the predominance of fragmented and indirect institutionalization must create contradictory tendencies, i.e. coexistence of increasing and decreasing institutionalization, in other words of parallel examples of growing standardization and of individualization (Buchmann 1989, Borkowsky & Streckeisen 1989). This contradictory situation should be borne in mind when examining theses of global standardization or de-standardization of life courses in the light of one or only a few aspects of their overall institutionalization.

²⁴ It is doubtful whether this synchronization should be seen as a social progress; it reminds one of the traffic jams caused less by the sheer number of circulating vehicles than by the rigid vacation schedules imposed on whole societies...

On a more conceptual level, it is important to distinguish the inclusion of solidarity functions into the welfare state and their bureaucratization; they are often treated, even implicitly, as one and the same

Presumably, institutional constraints and incoherences taken together can explain a large proportion of the persistence of certain life course patterns as well as the difficulties encountered by life course innovators who try to realize sequences of their own choice that deviate from these patterns. It is unnecessary to stress that an emancipatory alternative to this situation would not be to improve the homogenization of life course relevant bureaucratic rules - who would wish to see an inter-ministerial life course coordination service put to work! - but the creation of more individual autonomy concerning life course choices without a higher price to pay in terms of less social security; this could largely be done by eliminating entitlement rules that depend on specific normality conditions or on age²⁵.

3.4. Institutional change and life courses

The conceptual bridge between macro- or mesosocial, institutional changes and microsocial life course patterns can be built from both sides. Starting from the life course patterns, criteria of institutionalization and de-institutionalization can be developed which clarify the search for empirical answers to the question of which of the two tendencies prevail. Starting from institutional change, forms of change can be identified that have consequences for life courses and their degree of standardization. These perspectives complement each other and overlap to some extent as they point to the same processes. In the following, the first perspective will be treated theoretically, the second empirically (see also the vast material laid out in the contributions to Weymann 1989).

3.4.1. Indicators for the degree of institutionalization of life course patterns

Let us first define more precisely what we mean by institutionalization on the microsocial level. Beyond the somewhat superficial meaning of an observable uniformity of behaviors, the social control of personal action spaces is essential. In an individual perspective we should distinguish between two components of institutionalization: the proportion of a person's actions and relationships which take place in institutionalized interaction fields (scope of institutional coverage) and the degree of control or exerted within these fields (domination). The degree of institutionalization of an individual's life course should theoretically be higher if it is organized by a smaller

phenomenon, especially so in the recent debate about life course institutionalization in German sociology (Mayer & Müller 1986, 1989; Mayer & Schoepflin 1989; Kohli 1985, 1986). The latter is not limited to the state as the movement toward ever higher concentration in the private economic sector has to a large extent the same implications for the world of everyday life.

²⁵ Galtung (1970) has figured out an interesting life course utopia on a macrosociological level.

number of interaction fields (extreme case: overall control by a single institution = total institution)²⁶.

With the help of our theoretical model, we can distinguish at least eight analytical aspects of life course standardization which must be considered in order to diagnose increasing or decreasing institutionalization:

a) Prevalence of specific passages, i.e., or entries into and exits from specific institutional fields (e.g. introduction of compulsory schooling or degree of effective alphabetization, generalization of marriage or its decrease, generalization of retirement).

b) Duration of participation in a specific institution (e.g. tendency to prolonged schooling or any other prolongation of specific stages in the life course, such as the post-child family, generalized by the increase of life expectancy - Imhof 1987, Höpflinger 1986).

c) Restriction or expansion of multiple participation (and its prevalence), i.e., the number of social fields in which persons participate while in a given life course stage²⁷.

d) Restriction or expansion of the globality of (multiple) participation, i.e., the extent to which all of an individual's acts are comprised by the fields in which he/she participates.

e) Increase or decrease in sequencing, i.e., the rigidity or flexibility of the order in which biographical stages or participation-position-role configurations are following each other (e.g. the historical transition from all-encompassing schools to schools organized in successive age-defined classes²⁸).

f) Increase or decrease in the number of stages in a standard biography (e.g. rise of new or generalization of existing stages in the family life cycle such as the pre-child or post-child phases, professional re-entry of full-time housewives, etc.).

²⁶ This definition is not entirely tested. Maybe it would be preferable to attach multiplicity or homogeneity of control to the dimension of dependence/autonomy and not to the degree of institutionalization. It seems of great importance in either case, since multiple control can not only create problems of individual and collective coordination and resulting tensions, but also enlarge available options and opportunities. Mizruchi (1983) gives fascinating historical examples for both aspects.

²⁷ This criterion is analogous to a) but refers to a person's whole configuration.

²⁸ According to Petitat (1981: 119), this fundamental change in the functioning of educational institutions - largely forgotten nowadays - dates back in European countries to the middle of the 16th century, i.e. long before the generalization of compulsory schooling. See also Sommerville (1982: 190) who states our conclusion explicitly: "There was a further narrowing as teachers gave more thought to rationalizing their methods. For grading the curriculum so that it proceeded from the simple to the complex led naturally to the age-grading of students. By the end of the seventeenth century, some schools had segregated each year of age into its own class."

g) Increase or decrease in the chronologization of biographical sequences (or, less relevant today, the compulsory link between certain passages and other criteria), e.g. as a function of welfare state or other legal regulations²⁹.

h) Increase or decrease in the number of available options at a given configurational passage, and, as a consequence, the degree of ascription of entire biographical sequences (i.e., the number of available standard life courses)³⁰.

3.4.2. Institutional change and individual configuration sequences

Taking now as a starting point the level of institutional sectors and the organizations within them, we can distinguish between changes affecting specific sectors and those affecting the relationships between them.

a) Change of an institutional sector

1. Fundamentally, any aspect of an institutional sector may have consequences on individual life courses, but some will be more influential than others. An institution can emerge, an existing, but restricted institution can generalize its influence over the population, or an institution can disappear; all of these changes of institutional structures will influence some biographical stages of the persons who participate in them. The effective introduction of compulsory schooling forces all young members of society to enter into this social field and to stay within it during a minimal period, a social generalization which more or less creates adolescence as a distinct stage and at legally fixed ages in all life courses (Gillis 1974, Roth 1983³¹). The generalization of retirement regulations and social security during the 20th century does not give men and women at the crucial age the option to retire from work life, but makes retirement largely compulsory.

²⁹ It is important to avoid any definitional relationship between age-grading and life course institutionalization. Chronologization of certain passages is a form of bureaucratic life course institutionalization specific to modern societies. In age-graded societies, chronological age is secondary with respect to the socially defined membership in age groups or "promotion cohorts". A nice illustration of this fact results from situations where the generational membership of a person becomes problematic on other grounds, e.g. because that person is privileged by experiences and knowledge gathered in the extra-communal world (Parin et al., 1963, relate such cases from the Dogon in East Africa). In such a situation, the lacking congruence of implicit and explicit criteria of social positioning can be reinstalled by attributing the person to a higher age group, i.e. by redefining his/her social age.

³⁰ Theoretically, we can conceive of a situation in which there exists a number of normal biographies that are hard to leave, but the choice between them not tied to gender or social origin. Empirically, there will be a strong (positive) relationship between the number of options at specific passages and the number of whole standard life courses. Moreover, we should not forget that even if we define the number of life course stages very restrictively, the number of theoretically possible and empirically existing sequences increases very quickly with de-standardization (Rindfuss et al. 1987).

³¹ The legal introduction of this principle (for many European states early in the 19th century) may be considerably prior to its effective realization (Kaelble 1983: 102-114).

2. An institutional sector can expand or shrink, thus altering the proportion of a society's members who participate in it, and the forms of their recruitment. Thus, fluctuations of employment according to the business cycle directly influence the number of unemployed persons, suffering from imposed configurational incompleteness (Jahoda 1982).

3. An institutional sector can change its structure and form, influencing processes of upward and downward mobility and thus the creation or disappearance of configurational disequilibria. As an example, the Swiss economic structure underwent strong expansion on its middle levels during the 60's and at the beginning of the 70's, affording a large proportion of Swiss workers upward mobility into configurations where their occupational position and income outgrew their educational legitimation (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973); in terms of biographical projects, this situation can create tendencies to increase the educational position, which seems in fact to have been the case for this generation as well as for their children.

b) Change of relationships between institutional sectors

The various sectors constituting the institutional order of a society are not all equally central, their centrality depending mainly on the proportion of societal power administered by them. Thus, the macrosocial importance of an institutional sector is influenced not only by its internal changes, but also, directly or indirectly, by changes in other sectors and its relationships to them. Let us consider two cases only.

1. An institution can win or lose power and societal centrality. This determines how inevitable participation in it will be for individuals beyond, but probably in accordance with social norms of configurational completeness, at least for certain periods. This implies also a variation of the institution's structuration potential for individual biographies. To take again an example from educational and economic history: the varying relationship between school and work is essentially based on the instrumentality of the individuals' education for their occupational positions. The readiness to submit oneself to the rules of school life depends largely on the degree to which this instrumentality is perceived to be real, and this will also influence the likelihood of longer or shorter educational periods in individuals' life courses. Another example is the secular loss of power by the church in Western societies which has considerably lessened the control this institution can exert on the organization of individual life

courses, and more generally in the structuring of social rhythms (Zerubavel 1981, Boswell 1988)³².

2. The relationships between the major societal hierarchies, i.e., the institutional sectors of which they are part, can change in a way that increases or decreases the degree of crystallization of the society's stratification system³³. Decreasing crystallization of social hierarchies has been diagnosed for Western societies for quite some time (Kocka 1979, Beck 1983, Buchmann 1991, Levy & Joye 1994); it could well be the structural basis of the increase in social and cultural individualism, frequently discussed in European sociology. Changes of crystallization directly affect the frequency of imbalanced configurations in a society, and probably also the diversity of biographical sequences (at least concerning positional changes).

This somewhat cursory enumeration of macrosocial changes influencing individual life courses is far from being complete. Its function is only to exemplify how the proposed analytical model allows one to spot such inter-level influences.

3.5. General tendencies of institutional change

Not all macrosocial changes are of equal importance for the reproduction or transformation of institutionalized life course patterns. The following hypotheses about the potential bearing of some actual trends upon life course institutionalization offers illustrations of how research in this field may be oriented.³⁴

1. De-crystallization of social stratification: Suppose that since World War II, Western stratification systems have undergone a process of de-crystallization. Such a process implies an increase of the number of participation profiles with non-equivalent positions. On the level of everyday experience this means that it becomes increasingly unlikely for any member of the society to encounter people with exactly the same structural location, the same interests and perceptions than her- or himself. This seems to be one of the main structural conditions for processes of individualization

³² Another example, somewhat specific to the Swiss context, is the army. Service is compulsory for young men, and for a long time, especially since the Second World War, its social legitimacy has remained unquestioned, including its function as an instrument for social mobility. Several indices show a marked decrease of its legitimacy and a concomitant decrease of its control capacity on individual behavior (Haltiner 1985). In a recent vote on a popular initiative, over a third of the voters supported its simple abolition, which would imply the disappearance of an important stage in the standard life course of a large majority of Swiss men.

³³ Landecker (1981) proposed a similar, but narrower concept of "class crystallization"; his version is too narrow for our purpose.

³⁴ In order to underline the purely speculative nature of the argument, no references to any literature shall be made although the trends as well as the hypotheses are discussed by various authors.

(structural and ideological). As the mechanisms that create more diversity of participation profiles may also decrease life course standardization.

2. Institutional consolidation: Some macrosocial processes (e.g. the increasingly international reorganization of economic structures, the ensuing concentration of power and the correlative transformation of power relationships, especially between state and economy on the national level), may lead to a new stabilization of some institutional structures. Institutional stabilization may very well contribute to a new increase of crystallization. We should postulate that the hypothesis formulated in the preceding paragraph should hold also for the opposite development: increasing crystallization may reinforce life course institutionalization. Generally then, we should expect that historical variations of crystallization affect life course standardization.

3. Partial de-institutionalization (presumably mainly on the microsocial and possibly meso-social level, e.g. increasing although marginal segments of autonomy of many kinds, from unofficial and often de-monetarized forms of economy to the culture and practice of do-it-yourself to alternative forms of production) and concomitant tendencies to increased autonomy and decentral networking (including new forms of domestic cohabitation),

4. Generalization ("democratization") of risks with large-scale incidence is another major macro-trend. Does it affect life course regimes and how? It may, for instance, contribute to a de-legitimation of the (national) polity to the extent that it proves incapable of controlling such risks (and be it only because its power is not sufficient to deal with risk generating processes that do not respect national boundaries). This issue appears to be rather far-fetched with respect to life course institutionalization, but cultural or ideological influences towards less commitment to institutional conformity claims seem plausible.

5. Large-scale integrated coupling of substructures goes on, despite obvious problems arising from such integration in any network (increased potential of generalization of local turbulences and crises). This process concerns above all the global economy and is supported by the ever increasing importance of multinational corporations with a global and no more national strategy, but also by the opening up of the internal economies of Eastern and Third World countries. It is weakly regulated by such institutions as the world bank and the IMF which tend rather to reinforce it than to compensate. On national and subnational levels, this could imply pressures to disinstitutionalization and deregulation, increasing therefore life course de-standardization and uncertainty.

These (and other) trends may have various direct and indirect consequences for the life course regimes, some of which may contradict each other (such as tendencies toward more institutionalization, others toward less of it). The coexistence of contradictory tendencies suggests the thesis according to which the most highly developed societies are increasingly characterized by a drifting apart of their powerful institutional structures and the autonomy-seeking everyday world, with a corresponding de-legitimation of the societal institutions' control capacity and a sometimes rather wild exploration of alternative, informal and often short-lived meso-structures. Indeed, the main institutional structures seem to be too powerful and self-reproducing and too much in control of central social resources to be threatened in their very existence. However, their decreasing legitimacy and the ensuing displacement of subjective relevances may foreshadow the future necessity of structural adaptations. In the meantime, instead of speculating on general institutionalization or de-institutionalization of life courses on the shaky grounds of very partial findings, we should start studying these processes in all their actual complexity. Hopefully, this article may contribute some analytical tools for such an enterprise. The tandem of ("qualitative") biographical analysis and ("quantitative") life course research should no longer be seen as fundamentally opposed but as complementary approaches. Taken together, they are bound to contribute enormously to the general sociological understanding of the interdependencies between micro- and macrostructural levels of social organization, as their common object, individually and socially constructed life trajectories, is located at the core of their encounter.

4. Bibliography

- Anderson Michael, The Emergence of the Modern Life Cycle in Britain. *Social History* 1985, 10(1), 69-87.
- Beck Ulrich, Jenseits von Stand und Klasse? In: Reinhard Kreckel (ed.), *Soziale Ungleichheiten*. Sonderband 2, *Soziale Welt*, Göttingen 1983.
- Berger Peter L. & Luckmann Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Doubleday, Garden City 1966.
- Blau Peter M. & Duncan Otis Dudley, *The American Occupational Structure*. Wiley, New York 1967.
- Blau Peter M., *Inequality and Heterogeneity: A Primitive Theory of Social Structure*. Free Press, New York 1977.
- Borkowsky Anna & Streckeisen Ursula, *Arbeitsbiographien von Frauen*. Rüegger, Grösch 1989.

- Bornschiefer Volker & Peter Heintz, Statusinkonsistenz und Schichtung - Eine Erweiterung der Statusinkonsistenztheorie. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 1977, 6(1), 29-48.
- Boswell J., *The Kindness of Strangers. The Abandonment of Children from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Allen Lane & Penguin, London 1988.
- Brinkmann C., Die individuellen Folgen langfristiger Arbeitslosigkeit. Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Längsschnittuntersuchung. *Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung* 1984, 17(4), 454-473.
- Brose Hanns-Georg & Hildenbrand Bruno, Biographisierung von Erleben und Handeln. In: Hanns-Georg Brose & Bruno Hildenbrand (eds.), *Vom Ende des Individuums zur Individualität ohne Ende*. Leske & Budrich, Opladen 1988, 11-30.
- Buchmann Marlis, Soziale Schichtung im Wandel. Zur Differenzierung der Struktur sozialer Ungleichheit in der Schweiz. In: Volker Bornschiefer (ed.), *Das Ende der sozialen Schichtung? SEISMO*, Zurich 1991, 215-231.
- Buchmann Marlis, *The Script of Life. Entry into Adulthood in a Changing World*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1989.
- Clark Terry N. & Lipset Seymour M., Are Social Classes Dying? *International Sociology* 1991, 6(4), 397-410.
- Connell R.W., *Gender and Power. Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Stanford University Press, Stanford 1987.
- Erikson Erik H., *Childhood and Society*. Norton, New York 1950.
- Feibleman J. K., *The Institutions of Society*. Allen, London 1956.
- Fryer D. & Payne R. L., Unemployed worker's pro-activity as a route into understanding psychological effects of unemployment. Memo 540, University of Sheffield 1983.
- Galtung Johan, *Pluralism and the Future of Human Society*. World Congress of Future Research, Kyoto 1970.
- Gillis John R., *Youth and History. Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 - Present*. Academic Press, New York 1974.
- Glaser Barney & Strauss Anselm, *Status Passage*. Aldine, New York 1971.
- Goffman Erving, *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Doubleday Anchor, New York 1961.
- Gross Neal, Mason Ward S. & McEachern Alexander W., *Explorations in Role Analysis. Studies of the Superintendency Role*. New York 1958.
- Haltiner Karl W., *Milizarmee - Bürgerleitbild oder angeschlagenes Ideal?* Huber, Frauenfeld 1985.
- Havighurst Robert, *Developmental Tasks and Education*. New York 1952.

- Heintz Peter, A Theory of Societal Systems, and: Structural and Anomic Tensions. In: idem (ed.), A Macrosociological Theory of Societal Systems I. Huber, Bern 1972, 127-139, 140-148).
- Heintz Peter, Strukturelle und anomische Spannungen. Kap. 14 in: idem, Einführung in die soziologische Theorie. Enke, Stuttgart 1968.
- Heintz Peter, Subjektive und institutionalisierte Werte in der Gegenwartsgesellschaft. In: von Allemann Hugo (ed.), Soziologie in weltbürgerlicher Absicht. Festschrift für R. König. Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1981, 158-174.
- Heinz Walter R. et al., Statuspassagen und Risikolagen im Lebensablauf. Institutionelle Steuerung und individuelle Handlungsstrategien. Forschungsprogramm des Sonderforschungsbereichs 186, Bremen 1988.
- Heinz Walter R. (ed.), Theoretical Advances in Life Course Research (Status Passages and the Life Course, vol. I). Deutscher Studien Verlag, Weinheim 1991 (a).
- Heinz Walter R. (ed.), Institutions and Gatekeeping in the Life Course (Status Passages and the Life Course, vol. II). Deutscher Studien Verlag, Weinheim 1991 (b).
- Heinz Walter R. (ed.), Theoretical Advances in Life Course Reserach (Status Passages and the Life Course, vol. III). Deutscher Studien Verlag, Weinheim 1992.
- Held Thomas, Institutionalization and De-Institutionalization of the Life Course. Human Development 1986, 29: 157-162.
- Hoffmann-Nowotny Hans-Joachim, Soziologie des Fremdarbeiterproblems. Eine theoretische und empirische Analyse am Beispiel der Schweiz. Enke, Stuttgart 1973.
- Höpflinger François, Bevölkerungswandel in der Schweiz. Zur Entwicklung von Heiraten, Geburten, Wanderungen und Sterblichkeit. Rüegger, Grusch 1986.
- Imhof Arthur E., Dreimal soviel Zeit zu leben wie unsere Vorfahren - noch haben wir Probleme damit. In: D. Kamper & C. Wulf (eds.), Die sterbende Zeit. 20 Diagnosen. Darmstadt/Neuwied 1987, 175-201.
- Jahoda Marie, Employment and Unemployment. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982.
- Jahoda Marie, Lazarsfeld Paul F. & Zeisel Hans, Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Hirzel, Leipzig 1933 (Verlag für Demoskopie, Allensbach/Bonn 1960).
- Kaelble Hartmut, Industrialisierung und soziale Ungleichheit. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1983.
- Kocka Jürgen, Stand - Klasse - Organisation. Strukturen sozialer Ungleichheit in Deutschland vom späten 18. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert im Aufriss. In: Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), Klassen in der europäischen Sozialgeschichte. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1979, 137-165.
- Kohli Martin, Die Institutionalisierung des Lebenslaufs. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 1985, 37(1), 1-29.

- Kohli Martin, Gesellschaftszeit und Lebenszeit. In: Berger Johannes (ed.), Die Moderne - Kontinuitäten und Zäsuren. Sonderband 4, Soziale Welt 1986, 184-208.
- Landecker Werner S., Class Crystallization. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1981.
- Lenski Gerhard E., Status Crystallization: A Non-Vertical Dimension of Social Status. American Sociological Review 1954, 19, 405-413.
- Levy René, Arbeit zwischen Wert und Unwert: Grundwelle des Kulturwandels oder publizistischer Sturm im Wasserglas? Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie 1986, 12(1), 25-48.
- Levy René, Der Lebenslauf als Statusbiographie. Die weibliche Normalbiographie in makrosoziologischer Perspektive. Enke, Stuttgart 1977.
- Levy René, Systèmes sociétaux et tensions. Une approche sociologique à redécouvrir. Actes du Congrès européen de systémique. Lausanne/Paris 1989, 331-341.
- Levy René & Dominique Joye, What is Switzerland's Stratification Like: Classes, Prestige Gradation, Professional Categories? International Sociology 1994, 9(3), 313-335.
- Mayer Karl Ulrich & Müller Walter, Lebensabläufe im Wohlfahrtsstaat. In: Ansgar Weymann, Handlungsspielräume. Enke, Stuttgart 1989, 41-60.
- Mayer Karl Ulrich & Müller Walter, The State and the Structure of the Life Course. In: Sørensen Aage B. et al. (eds.), Human Development and the Life Course. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale 1986, 217-245.
- Mayer Karl Ulrich & Schoepflin Urs, The State and the Life Course. Annual Review of Sociology 1989, 15, 187-209.
- Merton Robert K., Social Theory and Social Structure. Free Press, New York 1968.
- Mizruchi Ephraim H., Regulating Society: Marginality and Social Control in Historical Perspective, Free Press, New York 1983.
- Moen Phyllis, Dempster-McClain Donna & Williams Robin M., Social Integration and Longevity: an Event History Analysis of Women's Roles and Resilience. American Sociological Review 1989, 54(4), 635-647.
- Neugarten, Bernice L., Moore Joan & Lowe, John C., Age Norms, Age Constraints, and Adult Socialization. American Journal of Sociology 1965, 70, 710-717.
- Offe Claus, Arbeit als soziologische Schlüsselkategorie? In: Offe Claus (ed.), "Arbeitsgesellschaft" - Strukturprobleme und Zukunftsperspektiven. Campus, Frankfurt/New York 1984, 13-43.
- Parin Paul, Die Weissen denken zuviel. Atlantis, Zürich 1963.
- Perrow Charles, Normal Accidents. Living with High-Risk Technologies. Basic Books, New York 1984.

- Petitot André, Production de l'école - Production de la société. Analyse socio-historique de quelques moments décisifs de l'évolution scolaire en Occident. Droz, Genève 1981.
- Rindfuss Ronald R., Swicegood C. Gray & Rosenfeld Rachel A., Disorder in the Life Course: How Common and Does it Matter? *American Sociological Review* 1987, 52(6), 785-801.
- Rosenbaum Heidi, Formen der Familie. Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang von Familienverhältnissen, Sozialstruktur und sozialem Wandel in der deutschen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1982.
- Roth Lutz, Die Erfindung des Jugendlichen. Juventa, München 1983.
- Saraceno Chiara, Patterns of Life Course Institutionalization and Deinstitutionalization for Men and Women in Contemporary Italy. Paper, Symposium "Status Passages and Social Risks in the Life Course", Bremen 1989.
- Schober-Brinkmann Karin et al., The psychological and social consequences of unemployment. Council of Europe, Strassburg 1987.
- Schütz Alfred / Luckmann Thomas, Structures of the Life-World. Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973.
- Sommerville C. John, The Rise and Fall of Childhood. Sage, Beverly Hills 1982.
- Tilly Louise A., Family, Gender, and Occupation in Industrial France: Past and Present. in: Rossi Alice S. (ed.), Gender and the Life Course. de Gruyter, Berlin/ New York 1984, 193-212.
- Voges, Wolfgang & Joachim Behrens (eds.), Statuspassagen und Institutionalisierung. (1994, forthcoming)
- Wacker Ali, Ansätze, Probleme und Perspektiven der psychologischen Arbeitslosenforschung. In: T. Kieselbach & A. Wacker (eds.), Individuelle und gesellschaftliche Kosten der Massenarbeitslosigkeit. Psychologische Theorie und Praxis. Beltz, Weinheim 1985.
- Weymann Ansgar (ed.), Handlungsspielräume. Untersuchungen zur Individualisierung und Institutionalisierung von Lebensläufen in der Moderne. Enke, Stuttgart 1989.
- Wright Erik Olin. Class, Crisis and the State. New Left Books, London 1978.
- Wright Erik Olin. Classes. Verso, London 1985.
- Zerubavel Eviatar, Hidden Rhythms. Schedules and Calendars in Social Life. University of California Press, Berkeley 1981.
- Zetterberg Hans L., On Theory and Verification in Sociology. Bedminster, Totowa 1965.
- Zoll Rainer (ed.), "Nicht so wie unsere Eltern!". Hypothese eines neuen kulturellen Modells. Arbeitspapier Nr. 60 des Forschungsschwerpunktes Reproduktionsrisiken, soziale Bewegungen und Sozialpolitik, Bremen 1987.